

PENLLERGARE: THOUGHTS ON ITS FUTURE

Cyfeillion Penllergare – Friends of Penllergare

Readers of the Bulletin will be familiar with efforts to highlight the plight and potential of Penllergare, not least through our book *Penllergare – a Victorian Paradise* which sold out in weeks! Now we are thinking about how – given the right circumstances – Penllergare could be brought back to life.

What is Penllergare, and why is it important? Situated on the north-western fringe of Swansea, it comprises the remnants of one of the finest, late Picturesque garden landscapes in Wales, created by J.D. Llewelyn. Despite neglect, vandalism and encroachment, many of its essential features are still present and it is accordingly graded II in the draft Register.

Penllergare is also notable for its wildlife. Despite its proximity to the city centre, and being surrounded by development, there is a sense of seclusion, probably unique in urban Wales. Llewelyn recorded the landscape in imagery of almost unsurpassed quantity and quality, much of which survives.

Proposed Objectives. Following other precedents we believe that a public/private sector partnership should be set up to cherish the cultural landscape and its setting at Penllergare, for long-term, public benefit. This objective would be achieved by:

- furthering the protection, conservation and restoration of the historic landscape;
- protecting and enhancing its diversity of wildlife species and habitats;
- providing an oasis in the surrounding urbanisation for quiet enjoyment by local people and visitors;
- promoting knowledge and appreciation of the landscape, its history and biodiversity.

Given Llewelyn's pioneering work we also think that a working exhibition of the history of photography could be based at Penllergare, and this might include imagery of Welsh landscape, parks and gardens.

Design Concept. We propose that the landscape should be managed as an entity, albeit with three complementary and distinct zones. These are:

- the *walled gardens*, to be reconstructed and adapted for gardening as practised by the Llewelyn family and their peers, in open ground as well as under glass. The former orchid house would be restored for its original purpose. A visitor and

interpretation centre would be adjacent;

- the *upper valley*, to be restored as far as possible to J.D. Llewelyn's design in the picturesque style, with a preponderance of ericaceous and other specimen planting, together with the pond and river, other man-made water-courses and structures, and inter-woven with the complex system of paths, making full use of vistas and viewpoints;
- the *remainder of the valley* including a new lake on the site of the one created by Llewelyn. The landscape itself would be restored to park, woodland and woodland pasture in the

picturesque style. Protection and enhancement of wildlife would be the main priority in this area.

Management Principles. To achieve the project objectives, and the preservation of the *genius loci* of Penllergare, would entail a continual, pre-determined process of renewal and restoration. Penllergare's design, its history, the diversity of its landscape, its natural species and habitats – and their appeal to the senses – would be crucial factors, together with assessments of public benefit. The first step would be to undertake comprehensive surveys (archival and field) on which would be based the strategic management plan. Independent, expert advisers would provide guidance on all such issues.

The Community. Right from the start Penllergare would be an integral part of the community. The project would actively support the local economy through sustainable employment, with particular emphasis on traditional skills. The employment of trainees and

volunteers (including less-able people) would be a high priority. Programmes of education and public information would be central to the operation of the park.

Context and Outcome. Penllergare would thus complement the other public spaces in Swansea and the region, including the National Botanic Garden. The outcome would be a high-quality public park in a restored Picturesque paradise, capable of standing comparison with the best anywhere.

If you have any comments or suggestions on these early ideas; or if you would like more information, perhaps including a visit; please contact, Michael Norman, at Coed Glantawe, Esgairdawe, Llandeilo SA19 7RT: phone or fax 01558 650735.



The Waterfall at Penllergare c1855. Man made waterfall built by J. Dillwyn Llewelyn to create the Fishpond.

A Salvo from the Friends of Hafod

As Secretary of the Friends of Hafod, I have been asked by members to respond to the article by Donald Moore, 'Steady progress at Hafod' in *The Bulletin* Autumn 1999.

He notes two projects only 'on the ground' between 1991-1999 viz. The Ladies' Walk and the Alpine Bridge. Part of the Johnnesian Ladies' circuit was skilfully restored, but a large section is incomplete, remains interim, badly maintained, and is without historical authenticity. In 1998, the entrance of the Ladies Walk, – a key section – was destroyed by inexperienced contractors, who were under the direction of The Hafod Trust. As yet no-one has been held accountable. There are no plans to repair this damage or restore this section.

The Alpine Bridge was completed in 1996 by H.T.Capps and Capps with the aid of a substantial grant from Cadw. Little or no satisfactory progress on the Estate has been made in the past twelve months.

It would be interesting to learn how £750,000 referred to has been spent in the intervening years.

The last major remaining artefact of historical interest on the Estate – the stable block and courtyard, is now Cadw listed thanks to representations by the Friends of Hafod, The Hafod Advisory

Committee, and others. Repair and maintenance as part of an on-going programme of conservation is desperately needed, to retain Hafod's cultural and historical integrity – not conversion to a meeting room and offices for the Hafod Trust staff members.

Likewise, conversion of Hawthorn Cottage is not a priority when so many other important structures on the Estate – walls, bridges, parapets and pathways need repair and restoration. Care and maintenance – yes. Conversion – no. What is the point in commissioning expensive historical and archaeological research and reports if the advice and recommendations are ignored, or some just used to serve the Trust's agenda?

The original worthy proposals from the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust in 1991 were for restoration and conservation of the unique, historic, picturesque landscape of Hafod – not securing permanent staff positions and ill conceived "imaginative initiatives" with no historical basis.

The Trustees should ensure that the current 'funds led' proposals are not pursued, and that 'needs led' proposals take their place, thus ensuring Hafod's survival and its unique 'sense of place' into the third Millennium.

Helen K. Little (Dr)

The Hafod Trust replies

Thank you for giving the Hafod Trust an opportunity to reply to Dr Little's letter. I note that it purports to be written on behalf of the Friends of Hafod, but in fact the great majority of members were unaware that such opinions were to be expressed in their name, and many would wish to disassociate themselves from her stated views.

In her allusions to the Lady's Walk, Dr Little offers a highly distorted version of events. It is wrong to suggest that part of the walk has been "destroyed" by recent activity. The route in question crosses a high, steep bank, which is being undercut by the river (picture p.3). At an unknown date, part of it had been blocked by soil and rubble dumped from above. There was no way of determining the condition of the path beneath the rubble layer, but pilot excavations raised hopes that it might be intact. However, when contract work began, it soon became apparent that a stretch of the path was simply missing: presumably it had collapsed into the river at some time before the material was dumped down the slope. With no solid foundation on which to build a replacement path – the presence of geological faults and slippery boulder clay makes the bank inherently unstable – it was obvious that the contract could not proceed to the agreed specification and costing. Furthermore, FE engineers advised that it was unsafe to continue. The path therefore remains closed and the funds have been diverted to other contract work.

In the future, when weathering and gravity have acted on the slope and helped it achieve a stable angle of rest, it may be possible to revive the scheme to reconstruct the path. This will of course be dependent on provision of a satisfactory engineering specification and availability of funding. The remainder of the Lady's Walk circuit is walkable throughout, though further restoration is planned when surveys have caught up. Wherever possible the "Cumberland" route will be followed, but the network of other estate paths will be respected and generally allowed to remain in use.

The rest of Dr Little's letter presents innuendo and opinion as fact and makes no attempt to construct a reasoned criticism; it therefore requires a less detailed response. It is perverse to regard

the conversion of empty estate buildings, for use in connection with the project and estate management, as a controversial policy. The common-sense conservation view, endorsed by Cadw, is that the best way to preserve old buildings is to use them. Even if financially feasible, to repair the buildings and then leave them stranded in the landscape, empty and forlorn, would be to treat them as picturesque stage props. We wish to see a landscape that functions, not a static pastiche.

Dr Little disingenuously asserts that the Trust has spent £750,000 on the project, when Donald Moore clearly stated that this was the sum raised. Total expenditure in the Trust's first five years amounts to ca. £275,500. Our accounts are audited and meet all statutory requirements.

It is reassuring that the "Friends" recognise the excellent work done in the early stages of the project by Dr Andrew Sclater, on behalf of the WHGT. The Hafod project continues to build on those foundations, without any major change of policy or priorities. We have a great deal of high quality research to draw on, much of it commissioned by the Trust. Reports received from consultants and contractors with acknowledged expertise are always carefully considered and nothing is "ignored". But as with any complex scheme, there are times when conflicting advice or constraints must be resolved by means of a workable compromise.

No-one would deny that the Hafod landscape and its constituent parts require a vast amount of conservation and repair, and that only a proportion of this work is covered by the current programme and budget. As approved works are completed and current funding expended, the project's momentum will enable it to continue attracting funds for further work. There will be room for both the prosaic and the imaginative at all stages of this process.

Could I conclude by expressing sadness that an inoffensive article by the Hafod Trust's retiring Chairman, Donald Moore – who has done so much to further the interests of Welsh historic gardens – should have been the subject of this latest outburst from a small and unrepresentative group of people.

*Jennie Macve
(Secretary to the Hafod Trust)*



A Comment from John Borron

There is a real danger that the whole cause of garden restoration in Wales may become tarnished by the attitudes to it adopted by supporters and opponents. It should be possible to discuss proposals for restoration with dispassionate integrity. This is especially the case where there are no villains. All involved wish to further the welfare of the gardens concerned.

I first saw Hafod forty years ago. I remember walking up the main drive from Pontrhydygroes through a scene of unimaginable chaos. Tree stumps and rutted drives created a bleak atmosphere of desolation. Over the years I have watched with admiration a deserted landscape regaining its soul. It is true that some of the earlier Forestry Commission plantings lacked sensitivity but the overall effect has been to create a great deal of beauty. I remain grateful to all those who have helped to bring this about: Elizabeth Inglis Jones, whose well written, if inaccurate portrayal of Hafod cast over it a spell which still works. Caroline Kerkham, whose early scholarship underlined the importance of Hafod. The Friends of Hafod, especially in their early days, did much to collect information on the estate's history. Richard Broyd, whose love of Hafod and willingness to devote his money towards its restoration has made progress in saving it possible. Above all, Forest Enterprise, who have patiently endured brickbats from all directions. I wonder how many private owners would be willing to tolerate so much interference in how they managed their property?

There have of course been mistakes along the way. The decision of the Forestry Commission to drive a road through Mrs Johnes' garden was a catastrophe. The quality of much earlier restoration,

i.e. the walls around Mrs Johnes' and Mariannes' Garden leaves much to be desired. There have been mistakes over more recent years. This is inevitable. No restoration work can ever be perfect. One is always at the mercy of individual workmen, and lack of historical certainty. All one can do is aim to make steady progress and this has been done. I was particularly pleased with the new Alpine Bridge. This closely followed the lines of the last Waddingham bridge and is an admirable piece of craftsmanship. I hope the tendency to airbrush the Waddingham's out of existence has been finally defeated.

The future holds much of interest and excitement. I thought the plans for the Waddingham stable block (see above) were a credit to the architect and their use would be of great benefit. Buildings unused, and this extends to Hawthorn Cottage, will in this day and age, be vandalised.

I hope that all those concerned will look at the successes as well as the failures of people with whom they disagree. Too often the Friends of Hafod have expressed their arguments in terms so extreme that it is hard to take them seriously. I found, in particular, their opposition to the Heritage Lottery Funding for Hafod so damaging that I resigned my membership. I regretted this, as in the past they had done much good.

I am inclined to think that part of the problem at Hafod is the complicated management structure. I do not think that the Hafod Advisory Committee any longer serves a useful purpose. Hafod is the property of Forest Enterprise. They should consult anyone they wish, but the decisions should be seen to be taken by them. Management by committee never works.

John Borron



Route of the Lady's Walk, Section 4, before the commencement of work. Slippage and under cutting has caused the beech to lean over the river Ystwyth. The mossy slope conceals rubble tipped from above.

The Hafod Project News

The Hafod Conservation partnership produces its own regular Project News. Issue no 11, published in March 2000, give an excellent digest of the Trust's activities. Items of news include the public consultation on the plans for an Estate Office in John Waddingham's 1882 Stable block, the use of a Norwegian Fjord horse for low impact timber extraction, a description of the five structures now Cadw listed Grade II, plans for guided walks, the completion of Cambria Archaeology's survey of the mansion site (which can be inspected at the Ceredigion County Archive Offices, or the Royal Commission for Ancient & Historic Monuments in Aberystwyth) and news of the ongoing mycological and lower plant surveys. Most of the Heritage Lottery Fund Grant of £330,000 has yet to be spent on specific projects for which it was allocated. However the two full-time posts of Estate Manager and Trust Administrator, funded for three years by the HLF, have been filled, the former by former Warden, Richard Crompton, the latter by a job sharing partnership of Michael Norman (fundraising, finance and forward planning) and Jenni Macve (administration, research and publication).

Copies of the Project news may be obtained from Jenni Macve, The Hafod Trust, Bronwydd, 3 Trevor Road, Aberystwyth SY23 2EH The project news contains more detailed information than can be accommodated in this Bulletin.

Caroline Palmer

Controversy in Carmarthenshire

Dr C. Stephen Briggs has asked us to draw attention to his recent article **Aberglasney: the theory, history and archaeology of a post medieval landscape** which was published in *Post Medieval Archaeology* 33 (1999), 242-284.

Briggs re-examines the available information about Aberglasney and adds interpretations of his own. Substantial appendices present previously unpublished results of excavations 1961-62 by G.R. Jones and the late W.B. Morris; description and interpretation of the gatehouse by D.J. Roberts and R.F. Suggett; description of the trees and shrubs by Ivor and Jane Stokes; dendrochronology of building timbers, yew tunnel and other trees by D.W.H. Miles and M.C. Bridge; and an extract of the Cadw listing for the terrace walk and the gatehouse.

Crucially, Briggs takes issue with the claim much popularized in recent press and T.V. coverage, that Aberglasney has 'the only 17th century formal garden left in Wales, and among only a handful in Britain'. The features at issue are the three-sided arched walkway, now popularly known as the parapet walk, and the rectangular space which it encloses, now named the cloister garden. Briggs presents the evidence for an alternative interpretation, that the cloister and its formal garden are in fact the remnants of a range of state-of-the-art cow houses from the late eighteenth century. Moving into a more speculative vein he suggests that by the nineteenth century the looped ashlar crenellations of the parapet may have been the gun rests for country gentlemen blazing away at wild duck decoyed to the Aberglasney pond.

He also assembles the evidence for dismissing the popular claim that Aberglasney's yew tunnel is 1000 years old. Many experts, privately and in print, have commented most sceptically on this wild assertion, and the dendrochronological evidence reinforces the view of the unromantics, that it is at best about 200 years old.

There is a subtext in Briggs's article and some slightly acerbic footnotes; which is that he feels that due archaeological investigation and recording did not take place as fully as he would have wished, and that the new gardens created by the Aberglasney Restoration Trust overlook and may have destroyed evidence of its former usage. Although Briggs does not expand on the wider issues here, it is clear that the restoration illustrates the common conflict between the aims of authenticity and the urge to introduce 'imaginative new gardens'. Undoubtedly the highly effective publicity machine of Aberglasney would have had a harder task in creating a garden appropriate to a handsome quadrangle of cowhouses with urine collection runnels in the pitched paving.

Aberglasney today has penetrated the consciousness of thousands of people, many of whom would barely know where to locate Carmarthenshire on a map. Many will delight, in an uncritical way, in the undoubtedly unprecedented innovations like Penelope Hobhouse's recreation of a 16th century formal garden now placed in the previously utilitarian walled kitchen garden, and will swallow unquestioningly any historic tales they are told about the site. Briggs may well be correct in asserting that many of the picturesque accoutrements of Aberglasney were the innovations of the nabob Thomas Philipps in the early nineteenth century, and that the remnant traces of Bishop Rudd's formal gardens, if they existed, have yet to be located but might possibly have been in what is now the north lawn. However, no previous owner of Aberglasney would have given a moment's thought to the ethics of perverting the past in the creation of a fashion which pleased the present. Only today's garden restorers have that tightrope to tread.

Caroline Palmer

Reprints of Dr Briggs's article are available price £3-00 including p&p from the author, Llwyn Deiniol, Llandainiol, nr Aberystwyth, Ceredigion SY23 5DT

Editorial

The Bulletin strives to reflect the topics which concern the membership. This issue has a distinctly confrontational flavour, for feelings run high both about Hafod and Aberglasney. It is hardly surprising that where gardens are concerned, as in other spheres, people do not naturally agree. However the more dispassionately real issues are raised, the more useful is the debate which can surround them. As Editor, I have had to perform more editing than is customary in removing entirely subjective and possibly libellous assertions from the letter presented for publication by the Friends of Hafod, and far too much time has been absorbed by these minutiae. However I firmly believe that differences of opinion can and should be aired in these pages. Readers may form their own views as to where their sympathies lie on particular points, and will also gain a greater sense of the foment of dissent which all too often underlies major restoration projects. When Thomas Johnes created Hafod, he listened only to his friends (if to anyone!). With today's publicly funded projects we all have a voice. Rarely, however, are we effortlessly in agreement.

Caroline Palmer

Apologia

In my article on Leeswood in the Winter issue of *The Bulletin* I claimed the White Gates as one of the Seven Wonders of Wales. However the rhyme, which came accurately to mind later, runs: *"Pistyll Rhaiadr and Wrexham steeple, Snowdon's mountain without its people, Overton yew-trees, St Winefride's wells Llangollen bridge and Gresford bells."*

All 210' of Pistyll Rhaiadr fall is still there; it is still a place of pilgrimage for lovers of the Picturesque. In the early nineteenth century Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn built a 'neat' cottage nearby for refreshments. These are still to be had, if in rather different form. Wrexham and Gresford's magnificent parish churches were under the patronage of Margaret Stanley, wife of the Earl of Derby and mother of Henry Tudor. She also endowed St Winefride's Well at Holywell and the beautiful parish church adjacent. Overton-on-Dee's yew trees, so well recorded, are one of the main reasons for the churchyard of St Mary's being included in the Cadw/ICOMOS Register of Historic Parks and Gardens in Wales.

In the first edition of Camden's *Britannia* of 1789, edited by Gough, Mrs Thrale is quoted:

"Sir George Wynne acquired a fortune by a lead mine, which in 20 years yielded £360,000 [multiply by 150 nowadays to allow for inflation in 2000]. This he spent on every kind of extravagance, electioneering, draining a bog and building his house on it, which stands pleasantly under a hill, with good gardens and a pair of wrought iron gates made by the same hand as those at Chirk and the second wonder of Wales after them."

Thomas Pennant claimed he had corrected Gough's MS. But the maker's marks under the paintwork of the White Gates (according to Paul Dennis who repaired them in 1985) are identical to those on the proven Robert Bakewell screen within Repton Parish Church in Derbyshire. Maybe Bakewell and the Davies brothers from Croes Foel, Wrexham co-operated? George Wynne's miners are reported to have been drawn from Derby.

Sara Furse

The Gateway Project

Sharron Kerr, Access Officer's Report March 2000



Elfed Roberts, General Manager, HSBC and Dr. Peter Elmes, Vice Chairman, WHGT with Kitchener Primary School at Tretower Court.

February 2nd saw the launch of the Gateway Project with a visit by Cardiff's Kitchener Primary School to Aberglasney for the first signs of Spring and snowdrops. The children had a thoroughly enjoyable day and many wrote odes to snowdrops as a result! March sees garden visits becoming more frequent as spring approaches. Four highly successful visits have taken place so far this month to Clyne Gardens, Tretower Court's medieval garden and Dyffryn Gardens. The fifth for this month is planned for Friday, March 31 to Colby Woodland Garden.

Clyne Gardens

Cwmtawe Comprehensive's Environment Club (Pontardawe) visited Clyne Gardens on March 8th to work on the production of a historic tree trail leaflet in conjunction with the City and County of Swansea. Thirty-nine children, aged between 11 and 14, were led around the tree trail by an enthusiastic and very knowledgeable garden foreman. Of the group, only four children said they had ever visited an historic garden before. Here are some of their comments:

Teresa, 12 - "I have never been to an historic garden before. - seeing all the plants and trees here not being chopped down but being looked after is lovely."

Nicholas, 12 - "It was cool. I liked all the trees. I liked being outside and I liked the bit when we ran down the hill."

Jonathan, 12 - "I've never been to a garden before. I liked it in Clyne all the trees were from different countries and were different to ours. I'd love to go to another garden to see lots more different plants. I liked learning about the men who used to hunt for plants all over the world."

Josh, 11 - "I've never been to a garden like this before. I liked learning about the Redwoods and their history. The Red Indians used them for canoes and if you leave them grow they can live up to a 1,000 years.. I liked the Lion tree too. I'd never seen anything like all these trees before."

Tretower Court

Kitchener Primary School after kindly launching the project, had two visits on the 13th and 14th March to Tretower Court for its project entry on the court and gardens for the Gateway and the Welsh Heritage Schools Initiative.

Thirty nine- and ten-year-olds visited the garden on both days. The children genuinely enjoyed discovering primroses and violets and smelling herbs such as rosemary, lavender and marjoram for the very first time.

We were also accompanied on the first day by the Vice-chairman of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust, Dr Peter Elmes and Elfed Roberts, General Manager Wales, HSBC, who presented a cheque for £2,500. Mr Roberts said, "Protecting the environment and the eco-system in which we live are key considerations for many of HSBC Bank's customers. By supporting the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust, which aims to achieve the sustainable protection, restoration and conservation of threatened sites, we hope to help safeguard historic parks and gardens in Wales for the benefit of the wider community."

Dyffryn Gardens

Fifty-one children from Pencoed Nursery School, Bridgend, kitted out in waterproofs, wellies and umbrellas visited Dyffryn Gardens in the pouring rain on March 23rd to look at the daffodil collection and other spring flowers.

Despite the very bad weather, a great day was had by all. Head gardener Alex Andrews had kindly arranged tables and chairs in East Lodge together with potted pansies, primulas, branches of catkins and willows for the children to draw after they had coloured their Gateway worksheets. The headmistress, staff and children were extremely helpful and patient while the Western Mail's photographer took dozens of shots of very wet children lined up in front of a huge bed of daffodils!

Footnote

The Chairman, Bettina Harden, is delighted to announce that the Gateway Project has been awarded a generous £8000 by the Esmée Fairburn Trust. This can be put up as matched funding against the Heritage Lottery Grant. Money will still be needed, from Branch Potting Shed sales, grants and individual sponsors if this excellent initiative is to continue in the coming years.

C.P.

Gerddi Bear seen posing at Aberglasney with pupils from Kitchener Primary School.

The Gateway Project Bear, Gerddi, is a traditional, hand-made, jointed bear standing 40 cm high and has a hand embroidered nose. He is not intended as a plaything but as a collector's bear. Gerddi is made by Gower Bears, based in Swansea, which specialises in unique hand-made, dressed bears for collecting, or as a memento of a special occasion such as a graduation.

He can be purchased by WHGT members or bear collectors. Telephone: 01792 233682.



LOST GARDENS

Channel 4 TV Publication.

ISBN 1 851442685, price £4.50 including P&P from
Lost Gardens, PO Box 4000, Manchester, M60 3LL

If Steven Briggs feels that restoration at certain Welsh gardens has been a little hasty there can be little doubt how he would view the activities of the Lost Gardens team, Monty Don, Ann-Marie Powell, Dr Toby Musgrave, and Dr Twigs Way should they be let loose on a Welsh garden site. In the interest of setting the adrenaline surging for the armchair viewers, this successful programme launched the team of four experts, aided and abetted by almost unlimited volunteer assistance and heavy machinery, onto the task of researching, excavating, restoring and replanting four Lost Gardens, each in a span of just four to five days filming. The philosophy of rain or shine, in sickness or in health, extended even to carrying on with 50 barely supervised volunteers while the landscape archaeologist was indisposed with a fever.

The four gardens thus televisually transformed to some representation of their former splendour were an Edwardian Japanese garden at Gatton Park, a moated Tudor garden at Shelley Hall Suffolk, a Victorian pleasure garden in Warwick, and a Victorian fernery at Eller How, in Cumbria. Obviously much more than five days work underlay each project, and the team's researchers had clearly mustered excellent archival resources from Record Offices, The British Library, The Lindley Library and relevant museums. Experts at geophysical surveys, pollen analysis etc. were also available on demand.

However projects such as these, with their emphasis on speedy completion and spontaneous decision-making in the light of evidence as it emerges, must inevitably be somewhat capricious in their results. What is perhaps worrying is that each such restoration makes compromises with a site which could, almost certainly, be more fully understood in a less hectic investigation. Each makeover reduces the stock of buried history for future research. I felt this particularly strongly in respect of the mid 19th century fernery at Eller How, where, in addition to the summerhouse and gothic folly tower which had brought the TV team to the site, they found an extensive tunnel fernery, for which they were unprepared, having not previously scanned the 25" OS map. As the extent of this piece of extravagant garden design became apparent, the team called in more JCB's to shift the soil and excavate the tunnels. It is worrying to consider that only as the diggers and teams of volunteers tore into the buried fernery, was Monty Don discovering a book by the garden creator's daughter, which describes grottoes, coloured glass windows, and live crocodiles in the fernery ponds. The restoration, to be completed in five days, did not give scope in either time or money to restore a glassed fernery, so instead a hardy fernery was planted, approached by steps via a newly constructed entrance. Very attractive it may be, but surely without the goals of TV, a slower excavation might have revealed more traces of the original structures, and an authentic restoration might have been contemplated.

The book is an excellent source book, with period plant lists for each featured garden, and a resource appendix listing suppliers of specialist products, archives, libraries and museums, and other sources of expertise. All this is most valuable. But if any programme were designed to add force to the argument that the historic gardens of Britain are a limited resource which should only be developed in the light of the most mature and fully debated research, then this series was it.

Caroline Palmer

HUMPHRY REPTON – LANDSCAPE GARDENING AND THE GEOGRAPHY OF GEORGIAN ENGLAND

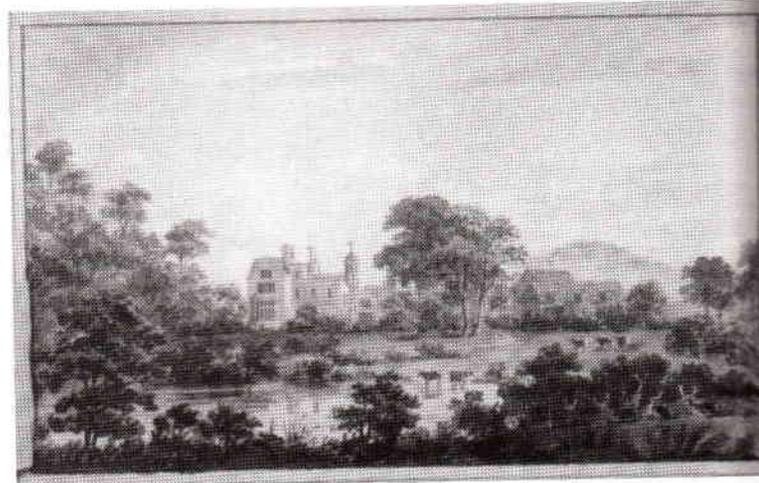
by Stephen Daniels,

Yale Center for British Art 1999 – price £40.

We owe much to the Yale Center for British Art particularly for their admirable publications. This splendidly produced book on Humphry Repton typifies the quality of their productions.

Stephen Daniels is Professor of Cultural Geography at the University of Nottingham and this gives weight to his appraisal of Repton. The sub-title is Landscape Gardening and the Geography of Georgian England. This reflects Daniels' approach and as a life of Repton his book is confusing. It lacks the limpid clarity which makes Dorothy Stroud's *Life (Country Life 1962)* such a pleasure to read. It is perhaps surprising that Daniels uses the same dust-jacket as Stroud.

It is the detailed analysis of Repton's commissions and approach that makes Daniel's book rewarding. The value of this is immeasurably increased by the superb quality of the illustrations. These enable one, time and again, to understand the delight with which the Red Books were received by clients. No-one could fail to be captivated by those elegant water-colours with their soft hues. The analysis of Repton's aims is always interesting but Daniels is inclined to be too dogmatic. The discrepancies between his account of the park at Stanage and that of Dorothy Stroud illustrates what I mean.



View of the west front of the house, without overlay, from the Red Book for Stanage Park (1803). Private collection.

"The park at Stanage has been badly managed and Repton offered some advice on making it productive as well as picturesque, reducing its size (converting parts to arable), destroying fern, draining bogs, folding sheep, grubbing up firs and larches from new plantations and replacing them with birches and thorns." (Daniels P.136).

"among his recommendations for the Park, Repton advocated that 'the fern should by no means be generally destroyed' but that some of the spruce firs and larches should be replaced by birches and thorns," (Stroud P.133).

While both authors have obviously studied the Red Book, the measured words of Stroud with their direct quotation carry the greater conviction.

There is inevitably much on the tedious controversy between Repton, Knight and Price, which may have amused but also, I suspect, bored contemporaries.

Nothing better illustrates our increased knowledge of Repton than John Phibbs' gazetteer with which the book concludes. Phibbs quotes Repton as saying that he wrote 'more than four hundred different reports in MS' and then lists 339 consultations. There are, therefore, more commissions to be discovered and some on Phibbs' list are speculative. Solely on the basis of having an entry in Peacock's Polite Repository, Phibbs adds in Wales – Llangattock (Monmouthshire), Bodlondeb (Denbigh), Ruabon (Denbigh) and The Gnoll (W. Glamorgan). I think that without any direct documentary proof the evidence is too slender to make even a tentative attribution in these cases.

It remains very possible that Repton had more commissions in Wales than Rug, Plas Newydd and Stanage. Quite apart from the contacts flowing from these commissions Repton must have been familiar with Hafod from his lifelong friend Sir James Edward Smith. A great deal more research needs to be done into the estate papers relating to Repton's known commissions in Wales, regarding both their implementation and any references to other commissions. It is for instance noteworthy that Repton's work at Rug should have been for a Vaughan of Hengwrt and Nannau. It is these kind of relationships that need exploring if further Welsh Commissions are to be traced.

It is interesting that the Welsh commissions dated from 1793 onwards when, as Daniels well illustrates, Repton's career was in decline. Was he perhaps widening his geographical range to counter declining commissions closer to home?

There is never a definitive book on any subject but Stephen Daniels' book adds immensely to our knowledge and understanding of Humphry Repton. Our whole appreciation of the approach to landscaping in the eighteenth century is changing and more research adds to our knowledge. Humphry Repton was the best-known landscape designer at the end of the eighteenth century. All who are interested in him should read Daniels' account of his work. Its only serious defect, for which author and publisher are equally to blame, is the appalling index.

John Borron



*Water colour on ivory by Mariamne Johnes, c.1800
Believed to be a miniature copy of the portrait by Romney.*

AN ATTEMPT TO DEPICT HAFOD

by David S. Yerburgh

published by the author price £7.50

Can a book about Hafod avoid controversy? Some might well opine not, but in this slim glossy volume with the gently quizzical title, David Yerburgh has done just that.

This is a charming small book, which collects together just about every significant historical Hafod image, and a few recent or contemporary pictures. It extends its remit to cover the walks which George Cumberland took in the vicinity. Each picture is simply described and the provenance of the original identified and acknowledged. Every picture which should be in colour is so reproduced. Even if most of the images have become familiar, it is a real boon to have them together in a single volume, where one can flick readily from one to the next. Some, like the tiny painting on ivory by Mariamne Johnes, I have seen exhibited at the National Library of Wales but would not know where else to turn for a reproduction.

The annotations on the facing pages are clear and systematic. Only a few small confusions caught my eye. The maps on pages 6 and 7 appear without captions, one is the alleged William Blake map of 1796, familiar to those who know the Hafod Trust facsimile "*An Attempt to Describe Hafod*". The other is a portion of a recent 1:25000 survey, but not, apparently, that recently published in the O.S. Explorer series. The caption of Mariamne's watercolour on ivory leaves me confused. If it is a copy of the famous great picture by Romney, which was destroyed in the fire, then the young girl on the right cannot be a self-portrait by Mariamne. Indeed is not the small child in the picture a depiction of Mariamne? I am told there are some sources who identify the two standing gentlemen as Major Lewis of Llanaeron, and Mr Stephenson of Llandysul. More explanation would be most welcome here.

New to me are the two views of Hafod which are reproduced on the back cover. These are described as a pair of gouache paintings of Hafod, possibly by Mariamne Johnes and in the possession of the National Trust. Equally they might be by any number of amateurs who visited Hafod; I would like to know more about them. There is also a little confusion in my mind about the porcelain. I understand that the two pieces on pp. 42 and 56 are items from the original Hafod Service commissioned by Thomas Johnes from Derby in 1787, and that the plate on p. 24 is one of the limited edition of 10 facsimiles produced in 1996 as a fundraiser for the *Friends of Hafod*. But the "20th Century oval dish" reproduced on page 79 comes with little explanation, and collectors might appreciate knowing its *raison d'être*.

These are small criticisms of a book which will be much used. Scholars will find the answers to all these questions elsewhere, and the author has been constrained by the need to limit the text to fit the book format. My only other substantial wish is that the format had allowed for the reproduction of the sentimental ode inscribed on the urn which stood in Mariamne's garden, (p.52). It is the sort of picturesque rhyme of little merit which one would search far to find in an anthology of verse.

The book is not a guide book, but nonetheless will probably entice more newcomers to Hafod than any publication since Peacocks in Paradise. It is also a must for serious Hafod aficionados.

It is available from the author and publisher Rev. Canon David Yerburgh, 2 Mill Race Close, Mill Road, Salisbury, Wilts SP2 7RX Price £7-50

Caroline Palmer

WHGT A.G.M.

& LECTURE BY: BELINDA JUPP

Saturday 10th June 2000

Insole Court, Fairwater Road, Llandaff, Cardiff
(a few hundred yards from the Cathedral, on the South side of
Fairwater Road),

The pleasure grounds of Insole Court surround a 19th century baronial house. Built for the Insole family in 1855 and massively improved in 1874 in the grand Gothic style, there are balustraded terraces and a magnificent Cedar of Lebanon. There will be an opportunity to explore the gardens before and after the A.G.M. Rookwood Hospital, itself once a substantial Victorian house, is nearby. With the hospital faced with closure, the mansion and grounds face an uncertain future. Members may like the chance to see these informal gardens and their 18th century summer house.

- 11.00 a.m. Coffee & Registration
12.00 p.m. **Annual General Meeting**
1.00 p.m. Luncheon
2.00 p.m. **Historic Garden Restoration in Ireland**
by Belinda Jupp

Working as an Historic Garden consultant is Belinda Jupp's second career, having trained in Fine Art and as a teacher. She prepared the *Heritage Gardens Inventory* and later the *Register of Historic Gardens* for the six counties of Northern Ireland and has worked on HLF schemes for public parks there and in England and Wales. Her work in the Republic of Ireland has included historic garden surveys as well as recommendations for restoration for the several sites that are being restored in the Great Gardens of Ireland Restoration Project.

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WHGT STUDY DAY

KNOTS & PARTERRES IN WALES

Saturday 3rd June 2000

Museum of Welsh Life, St Fagans, Cardiff

This promises to be a fascinating day studying an eternal theme in garden design as it relates to Wales. In addition to learning about the creation of knot gardens and parterres throughout garden history, there will be the opportunity to learn about the practical aspect of designing and laying out your own knot garden. The tutors for the Study Day are among the finest authorities on their subject. Robin Whalley, well-known as a garden historian (and Chairman of the Brecon & Radnor branch) is the author, with Anne Jennings, of the definitive book, *Knot Gardens and Parterres*. Anne Jennings is the Garden Director of the Tradescant Trust and the Museum of Garden History in Lambeth. Dr John Savidge will be providing practical advice on the varieties of box and their propagation. The surrounding of the pleasure gardens of St Fagans Castle give physical examples of what can be achieved in planning and planting your own knot garden.

PROGRAMME

- 9.30 – 10.00 a.m. Coffee & Registration
10.15 a.m. Introduction
Knots & Parterres in Wales
Robin Whalley
11.15 a.m. Break (possibly another cup of coffee)
11.30 a.m. **Creating a Knot Garden or Parterre**
Anne Jennings
12.45 p.m. Lunch
2.00 p.m. **Practical Session** – This will involve drawing your own design or working on one supplied by Anne Jennings, discussing getting it on the ground, going out and looking at those planted at St Fagans, talking about varieties of box and their propagation with Dr John Savidge. You will get the chance to work with the experts, ask questions, solve problems &c.
4.30 p.m. Tea.

The cost of the day will be £25.00 to include lunch, coffee and tea. If you do not already have an application form, please contact Ros Laidlaw – 01970 832 268.

Potting Shed SALES

In support of the Gateway



Sunday 7th May 2000 2.00pm
Nanhoron, Pwllheli.

Sunday 28th May 2000 2.00pm
Llanerchaeron, Aberaeron.



Registered Charity No. 1023293



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